

attacks. On January 25 the UN forces attacked to the north, and by April 27 were in possession of Seoul and, along the entire front, had reached a line near the 38th Parallel. At this time the Chinese Communists, in their turn, launched a counteroffensive which drove UN forces once more to the south of Suwon, and Seoul fell into Communist hands for the third time.

Ten days earlier, General Ridgway had departed from Korea to assume the position of UN commander in Japan, because of General MacArthur's relief by President Truman. Named to succeed Ridgway was another soldier with no superior as a stout fighting man, General James A. Van Fleet, a West Point classmate of mine.

Following the Communist offensive, the last attack of which was made on May 16, General Van Fleet launched a final assault, recaptured Seoul, and established a line extending along the Han and Imjin rivers north of Seoul on the west, to Kosong on the east coast. Then on June 23, 1951, the Soviet representative, again active in the UN Security Council, put out peace feelers. Soon truce talks at Kaesong began.

Eventually the lines crystallized where General Van Fleet's offensive had halted, mostly north of the 38th Parallel. Later in the summer, sharp, violent clashes occurred over key terrain features, as each side fought to improve and protect its main positions. From that time on fighting was of a localized, even though bloody, nature, rarely over a battalion in strength. Under these circumstances the Korean War stalemated; there were no major military movements, but for many months more the war was to grind out painful lists of casualties without significant changes in situation or disposition.

In these circumstances the Department of State said repeatedly that the attainment of a unified, independent, and democratic Korea—as described in the UN resolution on the eve of General MacArthur's invasion of North Korea—was the UN's political goal. Its military goal, the Secretary insisted in testimony on Capitol Hill, had remained unchanged from the beginning: to repel the attack and restore the peace. "Neither the United Nations nor the United States," he said, "has ever undertaken the obligation to unify Korea by force."

This was the situation I saw when visiting the Korean front in December 1952.

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But now, in the spring of 1953, I was President and I considered several possible lines of action. First of all would be to let the war drag on, without a change in policy. If a satisfactory armistice could not be

quickly achieved, continuing this way seemed to me intolerable. We were sustaining heavy casualties for little, if any, gain.

Another plan might be to attack to the north to gain an all-out military victory by conventional means. This was the least attractive of all plans. The Chinese and North Korean Communists had sat on the same defensive line for a solid year and a half. Being diligent workers, they had done a remarkable job of digging interlaced and underground entrenchments across the entire peninsula, with positions organized in depth. They had partially overcome former logistical deficiencies by bringing in large quantities of artillery and stores of ammunition during quiet periods, and had a force in Korea superior in numbers to that of the ROK and United Nations forces combined.

These facts would not in themselves necessarily preclude an attack. The UN enjoyed air superiority, and, with the superior weapons and equipment and highly developed logistical system of the UN forces, an attack might well have been successful, particularly if accompanied by an amphibious landing in the enemy's rear. Nevertheless, any such attack would be costly, whether the objective was local or unlimited. The big tactical problem would be the breakthrough of the defense positions. Moreover, if the purpose were to occupy the major part of the peninsula of Korea, success would put us in an extremely awkward position, with a substantial occupation of territory but no ability to use our weapons to complete the victory—that is, unless the "sanctuary" concept were discarded and attack on airfields and targets in Manchuria were allowed. Such a change would increase the danger of spreading the war.

'An attack launched merely to move the line of contact to the narrow waist of the peninsula between Sinanju and Hungnam would not in itself prove decisive and would never merit the cost in lives.

Clearly, then, a course of action other than a conventional ground attack in Korea was necessary.

In the light of my unwillingness to accept the status quo, several other moves were considered in the event that the Chinese Communists refused to accede to an armistice in a reasonable time. These possibilities differed in detail, but in order to back up any of them, we had to face several facts.

First, it was obvious that if we were to go over to a major offensive, the war would have to be expanded outside of Korea—with strikes against the supporting Chinese airfields in Manchuria, a blockade of the Chinese coast, and similar measures. Second, a build-up of both United States and ROK forces would be necessary. I had already authorized the raising of military aid to the ROK Army to permit an increase from 460,000 to 525,000 troops and the organization of two new divisions. This would

bring the ROK Army up to fourteen divisions, as a step toward a total of twenty. In addition, there were more United States units available. In Japan, for example, the 24th Infantry Division and the 1st Cavalry Division³ were made up largely of personnel experienced in Korean fighting. A second Marine division was available from the United States. Build-up of Korean ammunition stocks would also be required, which would cut, undesirably but not fatally, into ammunition already committed to NATO.

Finally, to keep the attack from becoming overly costly, it was clear that we would have to use atomic weapons.

This necessity was suggested to me by General MacArthur while I, as President-elect, was still living in New York. The Joint Chiefs of Staff were pessimistic about the feasibility of using tactical atomic weapons on front-line positions, in view of the extensive underground fortifications which the Chinese Communists had been able to construct; but such weapons would obviously be effective for strategic targets in North Korea, Manchuria, and on the Chinese coast.

If we decided upon a major, new type of offensive, the present policies would have to be changed and the new ones agreed to by our allies. Foremost would be the proposed use of atomic weapons. In this respect American views have always differed somewhat from those of some of our allies. For the British, for example, the use of atomic weapons in war at that time would have been a decision of the gravest kind. My feeling was then, and still remains, that it would be impossible for the United States to maintain the military commitments which it now sustains around the world (without turning into a garrison state) did we not possess atomic weapons and the will to use them when necessary. But an American decision to use them at that time would have created strong disrupting feelings between ourselves and our allies. However, if an all-out offensive should be highly successful, I felt that the rifts so caused could, in time, be repaired.

Of course, there were other problems, not the least of which would be the possibility of the Soviet Union entering the war. In nuclear warfare the Chinese Communists would have been able to do little. But we knew that the Soviets had atomic weapons in quantity and estimated that they would soon explode a hydrogen device. Of all the Asian targets which might be subjected to Soviet bombing, I was most concerned about the unprotected cities of Japan.

³ These two units had been returned to Japan from Korea after long continuous combat duty. They had been replaced by two U. S. National Guard divisions, the 40th and 45th.

Meanwhile, General Mark Clark (who had succeeded Ridgway as United Nations commander) began to suspect that the Communists were building up forces in the Kaesong "sanctuary" area. He requested permission to launch an attack in the event he became convinced that a Communist attack there was pending. This authority I thought unwise to delegate at that time. But the question of the privileged ground which we had accorded the Communists for the negotiations was ripe for re-examination. Therefore, on the recommendation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, I asked the Secretary of State to look into the possibility of ending these privileges in case the armistice negotiations were unjustifiably prolonged.

The lack of progress in the long-stalemated talks—they were then recessed—and the nearly stalemated war both demanded, in my opinion, definite measures on our part to put an end to these intolerable conditions. One possibility was to let the Communist authorities understand that, in the absence of satisfactory progress, we intended to move decisively without inhibition in our use of weapons, and would no longer be responsible for confining hostilities to the Korean Peninsula. We would not be limited by any world-wide gentleman's agreement. In India and in the Formosa Straits area, and at the truce negotiations at Panmunjom, we dropped the word, discreetly, of our intention. We felt quite sure it would reach Soviet and Chinese Communist ears.

Soon the prospects for armistice negotiations seemed to improve. On the 22nd of February, General Clark wrote a routine letter to the Communist high command to ask whether they would be willing to repatriate seriously sick and wounded prisoners of war in accordance with the Geneva Convention. The sending of this kind of letter was almost a common practice, but this time the Communists expressed willingness to repatriate and to resume truce negotiations. This exchange of letters resulted in a dramatic operation called "Little Switch," in which all sick and wounded prisoners (684 United Nations personnel and 6670 Communists) were returned from the hands of their captors to their own lines.

On April 9 Korean President Syngman Rhee wrote me a frank letter of protest criticizing the Communists' recent offer for resumption of peace negotiations. If a peace agreement should be arranged that would allow the Chinese to remain in Korea, Rhee wrote, South Korea would feel justified in asking all her allies to get out of the country except those who would be willing to join in a drive northward to the Yalu. The United States forces, if they remained, he said, might then follow the fighters on the front lines, giving them support and coverage with planes, long-range artillery, and naval guns on both sides of the peninsula; but, he added,